By the "Queen of the Artists' Studios"

CHAPTER X.

(Continued from Last Sunday.)

By Audrey Munson.

I HAVE often been asked by friends and new acquaintances what is the ambition of an artists' model. In every profession there is a goal to accomplish which spurs on those who have adopted it, and, of course, it is plain there must be something to which the model looks forward—something apart from the hopes of every young girl for a home and husband.

I have never been able to satisfactorily answer this question—although I could answer it in a way. Every young woman who makes a commercial asset of her beauty and her plastic lines has many opportunities which other young women never meet. She may "set her cap," as the old folks used to say, for a rich man or a hero adaptable to her ideas of romance, or she may hope to be some day the inspiration of a great masterpiece and share with the artist the honors that such an achievement brings. Not always, though, are artists' models sufficiently appreciative of the ideals of the art to which they contribute to be satisfied with the thrill that comes with the realization that they have helped give the world a painting or a statue that will live forever.

The model who is enthusiastic about her work and who understands the emotions, the struggles and the triumphs of the artists who employ her almost always looks forward, however, to the time when she may be chosen by some great artist as his model for his conception of Phryne, the woman whose body was so beautiful that a company of severe and dignified Greek judges decided she could not be guilty of the grave crimes which the public prosecutors charged against her.

The Phryne of ancient Greece was proclaimed by this decision of the judges and also by the private opinion of the young bloods of that day to be the most beautiful woman in the world. The model of to-day who is chosen by a renowned artist to represent her is, by that very selection, proclaimed by that artist to be the most beautiful woman within his ken.

So, I think, it used to be my one ambition to be chosen by some one of fame to be his Phryne.

It was DeLeftwich Dodge, one of the few Americans ever admitted to the French Academy, who gave me the opportunity I had so long looked forward to. And, after a while, I had the satisfaction of knowing that my portrayal of the famous Phryne, who was, after all, just an artists' model as am I, had won for Mr. Dodge the coveted membership of the Academy and more than a score of medals from foreign museums.

Directors of museums and connoisseurs the world over have long agreed that Venus de Milo represents to them the acme of feminine beauty. But to artists themselves and their models it is Phryne who is always visioned in the mind's eye as the utmost perfection in feminine alluringness.

Phryne, as my readers may already know, lived at Athens about 300 years before the Christian era. She was not a modest maiden of retiring charms, but the professional beauty of the period, who had a palace and hanging gardens of her own, and whose household expenses, which included the upkeep of a large retinue of slaves and attendants, were paid largely by the artists who thrived at that time and who paid great sums of money for the privilege of painting portraits of her.

Any portrait of Phryne, even by an obscure artist, brought large sums. No rich man of Athens considered his atriolum, or drawing room, effectively furnished unless it contained a portrait or a statue of the city's foremost beauty. Highest honors were achieved by the painters and sculptors of that day only when their masterpieces had been inspired by her.

The greatest sculptor and also painter of her period was Praxiteles, a little—a very little, indeed—of whose work has been recovered from the ravaging of the centuries by the excavators of American and foreign museums. He had won acclaim by a portrait of Phryne, and became her principal patron.

Even as to-day there is considerable jealousy among artists who seek the service of the most popular models and who often are embittered against their more successful rivals who can afford to pay more for their time, or whose higher standing in the world of art wins their favor, there was keen rivalry in those days for the honor of engaging Phryne for her poses. Disappointed artists, who were snubbed by her or who could not afford to pay the great fees she exacted, plotted to embarrass her. They filed with the city's judges a charge of impiety against her, quoting as part of their evidence the luxury and expensiveness of her establishment and her conduct with Praxiteles.

Phryne was haled before the stern judges at once. It was during the hot months, and court was held at the seashore. Phryne, haughty and defiant, stood apart, an object of curiosity. The populace was gathered, the news of the charge and the trial having spread far and wide beyond the city. No one doubted the correctness of the charge against her, and no one doubted but that the proud beauty was come to her end at last.

One after the other the prosecutors read their charges. The judges shook their heads at the very gravity of the offenses alleged against the young woman. That she was a privileged person because of her calling as an artists' model was not accepted by the court as a defense.

When the evidence all had been spoken the judges turned to Phryne and commanded that she stand before them to receive her just sentence, according to one of the legends, her attorney plucked her robe from her and showed her unclad to the judges, who, in deference to her beauty, pardoned her.

According to another story, however, Phryne obeyed the summons, but prayed of the chief judge that before she was sentenced she be granted permission to step into the sea for a bath—that she might enjoy at least one more plunge before the mark of the felon were branded upon her.

The judges assented.. Phryne, her head held high, her carriage still majestic and imposing, walked to where the surf rolled up on the sand. Calling one of her own black slaves, she threw to him the garment which covered her. Thus uncovered, her body catching and reflecting the rays of the sun, Phryne leaped into the sea. A moment later she stood again on the beach, now frankly facing the judges and bidding them pass sentence upon her.

A few moments before the court was ready to pronounce a dreadful doom. Now the judges were of a different mind. From lip to lip there went the query, "Can such a beautiful creature be guilty of so grave a crime against the peace and morality of the citizenry?"

There was a hasty conference while the judges looked upon the undraped form before them. Then the president of the court arose and read the verdict of his confreres. It was an acquittal, to which was added the compliments of the court and the individual apologies of each judge for having been so near tarnishing such wondrous feminine beauty.

And so the fame of Phryne's beauty has come down the ages, and the model who loves the art to which she contributes is never satisfied until she has been selected to impersonate the famous beauty of Athens.

When I learned that Mr. Dodge intended to use me as a Phryne I learned also that he was not to do an ordinary painting, but a mural. My selection then became doubly complimentary. There are few models who serve well at posing for murals. Few persons who admire the ceilings of beautiful theatres, on which there are painted decorations symbolic of the drama or comedy, or the wall decorations in great museums, or, even, in the lobbies and dining rooms of expensive hotels, realize that many of the most famous paintings in the world are mural decorations.

Depth and perspectives, high lights and shadows are the principal objectives of the artist who makes a painting to be framed. The artist who decorates ceilings or walls in museums and palaces much achieve his effects without any of these things. His painting must blend into the decorations of the room, its furniture and its architecture. It must be beautiful, but not outstanding. The spectator must have the feeling of looking "upon" a mural design, not that of looking "into" it as when he examines a framed painting.

Consequently the model must have the peculiar ability of subduing all her flesh charm and her silhouette, her outlines, must be pure and symmetrical. Mural painting began with the cave artists of the glacial epoch, and was expanded by the Egyptians and Assyrians. The strange figures we are accustomed to seeing as illustrative of the life of the Egyptians and the Assyrians, found on tombs were our first historical murals, and always show the figures in profile.

Mr. Dodge's "Phryne" was to decorate a Fifth avenue ballroom. It was to be done on canvas and then glued into position in the room. He first did his groups on the great canvas stretched out on frames in his studio. From this grouping I caught his spirit, and when at last the day came for me to take position I was able almost to step into the picture—to fit my pose into his ensemble, and this by my own knowledge of just how Phryne herself would have displayed her form to those venerable judges and how my figure could complete the picture.

Mr. Dodge was much pleased with me. His great mural won the highest honors an artist's work can bring him. On exhibition in New York, it was viewed by hundreds of thousands of persons, and, like all truly great paintings, spread its message of beauty and sent those who know little of the past away to learn the story of the first of the world's famous artists' models.

Thus was my greatest ambition achieved. It might seem to many a little thing to look forward to—many other models accomplished more tangible goals.

And strange indeed were some of these goals. Writing of Phryne and the judges made me wonder whether some of those gray beards did not drop in later upon Praxiteles at his studio or go walking on the pleasant streets of Athens with his model.

And this reminds me of a very modern Phryne who was often employed for poses in the nude who found a most unique method of exacting a livelihood from the studio hangers-on without compromising herself to her own conscience. This young woman, who, strange to say, was frequently posed for Madonnas and angels as well as for figures in the "altogether," disliked the early hours demanded by artists and the close application posing entailed. In her search for the amusements that every artists' model may take advantage of if she cares more for her own pleasure than for her profession, she discovered that there exists a strange fraternity of dissolute elderly men of wealth who place a strange value upon feminine youth solely as an ornamentation to their own senility.

These men, known in their younger days as bon vivants and roues, seek to maintain that reputation among the company of similar spirits who make up their circle of acquaintances. To them there is no possible joy so desirable as to be seen in the night cafes, in the front rows of popular musical comedies or "revues" or on the fashionable roof gardens in company with a charmingly gowned and beautiful young woman. Elaborate dinners and gay parties usually celebrate these escapades, and rich escorts are quite willing to pay handsomely for the satisfaction that is theirs in their little play at still being so attractive to the fair sex that they can be favored cavaliers to the youthful beauty.

My readers will wonder, I know, not only how such things can be, but how young women can lend themselves to such make-believe. It is all part of the life that confronts the artists' model, for always it is to their ranks such men turn for their recruits.

The young woman of whom I have spoken was presented one day, while posing for an artist whose associations were comprehensive, to an aged Beau Brummel, who, in his time, had been one of the Stanford White-Harry Thaw coterie of celebrities. White-haired and almost tottering, he still retained in his grooming and manner the air of the bon vivant, and fought hard against the in-

The allegorical mural "drama" by
decoration over the proscenium arch of the New Amsterdam
painting every year Miss Munson was chosen by the artist to pose for ea

A charming study of Miss Munson by Benda, one of the foremost of modern painters. Benda's sketch was made while Miss Munson rested between poses for another painting, and shows her in repose.

"Phryne Before Her Judges," tne beautiful mural of William DeLeftwich Dodge, Academician, Miss Munson posing as Phryne. This mural is often said to be the greatest of modern works of this kind. As Phryne was the most beautiful woman of her time, the artist sought the most beautiful of modern models to portray her. At the right is a detail of the original painting.